

Fort Wall Painting by J.T. Harwood

History

By Russell Felt

The paintings hung in the halls of the high school for many, many years. There was a time during my reign when paintings were being stolen from the halls of high schools, mostly in the southern part of the county. There was some cleaning needed and a few repairs to the collection which I removed from the halls. I asked the district for funds for the needed work and was denied. I said I was going to sell part of the collection to fund the work on the rest. Suddenly money was found and I took the collection to Springville and their curator, Vern, and then we put the collection in the Library for a more protective location.

As for the Fort Wall, Lela Giles and Edna Loveridge came to me at the junior high school. They said the painting was donated by their class and they wanted it at the high school and I wouldn't move it since I liked it. It hung over the safe door in the secretary's office. I then went to high school and went back asking for the painting and was denied. I had borrowed the new junior high gym for a game due to a power problem at the high school. As I closed the lights off in the main closet, there was the painting on the floor with tears in it. The next Monday I went to the school and said I was taking it and we got it repaired and it is on display in the library and I have the only, at present, print of it.

Rita managed to get it done for my birthday. On the back my print it is signed and dated for me. If Edna and Lela were of that club then the stories match otherwise some sleuthing needs to be done. The collection is very **expensive** and has historic value to Lehi. I made photos of each painting and one set should be at the high school on file and another at the District for security. There had been no inventory of those works prior.

One of the values of the Fort Wall painting is that it shows the skills of J.T. Harwood prior to the eight LDS artists being sent by Brigham Young to Paris to

study with the Impressionists to refine their artistic skills and the collection demonstrates the before and after comparison.

What we did with the paintings may have been my crowning experience at the high school. No one really knows all this and I don't care, the works have been preserved. As you know, much of our history is being discarded and lost. The Fort Wall, I am certain, with the damage to it, would have been thrown away.

Incidentally, the Fort Wall Painting by Harwood is the only depiction of that historic wall around Lehi. It appears to me that Harwood took some liberties with the background scenes in order to get the complete scene on canvas. I love it. I was briefly tempted to keep it for myself but that quickly left my mind. In fact, had I wanted, with no record of the collections, one could have helped themselves to all of it without fear of being caught. I would have insured my salvation to another sphere had I given in to temptation. An abbreviated version of the Fort Wall is in one of the early histories of Lehi.